

## Intro SST 1 Transcript

BELLACK: There's a couple of key points that we think are really important to make you successful in doing skills training with your consumers. This is a population of people who have a history of failure and a whole host of things in their lives and in the community. And it's really critical that when they come to skills group, that they experience success. So it's very, very important for you to be positively reinforcing no matter what. There's a broad range of social or interpersonal activities that we can focus on.

WOMAN: Hi, Albert.

ALBERT: How you doing today?

WOMAN: Good.

ALBERT: This evening, would you like to go to the movies and see "The Soloist"?

WOMAN: "The Soloist"?

ALBERT: Yeah. That's supposed to be a real good movie.

WOMAN: I've heard it was good, but, you know, I've been really interested in seeing another movie.

BELLACK: We have broad programs on conversational skills, and the level of difficulty can be anything from how to start a conversation, how to leave a conversation. I mean, for many people with these problems, they're not comfortable on when to end. So they don't know things like making up a reason, like looking at your watch and then saying you have to catch a bus or you have to meet someone.

Or again, it could be engaging in romantic relationships. Dating skills. Negotiating for sexual relationships. Safe sex, which could involve both HIV-prevention kind of skills, teaching women how to refuse unwanted sexual advances.

Work-related skills. How do you get along with coworkers? All the different kinds of social situations that we all find ourselves in tend to be difficult for people with serious mental illnesses.

And what we need to do is identify which situations are relevant for them. So, for example, if they're really not interested in working, it probably doesn't make much sense to teach them work-related skills.

The analogy we often use is, if you think back to high school, learning a foreign language as a required class in high school versus learning a foreign language when you were planning a trip to that country. You're much more motivated to learn when you're going to go visit that country, and you're much more effective at learning when you're immersed in that culture than when you're just taking a class.

Well, the same is true for the folks we're working with. If they're not going to get a job anytime soon, it's probably not useful to teach them job skills. On the other hand, if they really are motivated to work, and they are looking for work, or they've just recently gotten a job, that's the ideal time to help them develop the skills they need to be successful.

The same is true for most other skills. If they're living in a supervised residence and there's no likelihood that they're going to move into independent housing anytime soon, it probably doesn't make sense to focus on independent housing skills -- how to find an apartment and live on your own -- when the real issues for them relate to what is their current living situation.

So, what we try and do is identify situations that are relevant to their current lives. It's

very important to work collaboratively with the consumer to identify mutual goals. What are *they* interested in? What would *they* like to be able to do best?